

**REMARKS:**

Careful consideration has been given to the Official Action of August 17, 2009 and reconsideration of the application as now presented is requested.

Claims 1-8 and 10 stand rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being allegedly anticipated by Cristian (US Patent No.4,640,013).

Claim 9 appears to stand rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being allegedly unpatentable over Cristian (not clearly indicated in the Office Action).

Claims 1-10 have been amended to be in better form for allowance without narrowing the scope. The claimed invention is clearly distinguished and patentable over the cited reference as will be discussed hereafter.

The claimed invention is directed to a centering drum for moving (centering) filter portions (5), which are seated in the seats of the drums, axially along the seats from an offset position to a centered position with respect to a reference plane T. To achieve this, the claimed invention provides centering means, which comprises a plurality of stop members located on opposite sides of the reference plane T to define the centered position, and push means for moving the filter portions axially onto the respective stop members, thereby to center the filter portions with respect to the reference plane T.

Furthermore, the claimed invention requires that the stop members are alternatingly

disposed on opposite sides of the reference plane (i.e. adjacent stop members are located on opposite sides of the reference plane).

In contrast, Cristian is directed to a device for wrapping a junction band around the abutting ends of two aligned cigarettes and one double filter interposed therebetween. To this end, Cristian provides wrapping means for wrapping the junction band. However, there is nothing in Cristian that would teach or suggest providing centering means for pushing axially the filter portions against respective stop members. In fact, Cristian's filter portions are interposed between two aligned cigarettes, and consequently, does not have to (and cannot) be moved axially to be centered.

In the Official Action, the Examiner has referred to various parts of Cristian with respect to the claimed features. However, the claimed invention is distinguished over those parts of Cristian as will be discussed below.

Element 12 of Cristian was cited by the Examiner to be analogous to the seat. However, Cristian's 12 are fixed wrapping members, which are not seats and do not receive filter portions as required by the claimed invention.

Element 17 of Cristian was cited by the Examiner to be analogous to the centering means. However, Cristian's 17 are spindles, which are rotatably mounted through bearings and do not (and cannot) act on the laterally offset filter portions to center them as required by the claimed invention.

Element 3 of Cristian is a stationary tubular member, which has a shaft 4 rotatably mounted therein through bearings 5 and is completely distinguished from the stop member as recited in claim 1.

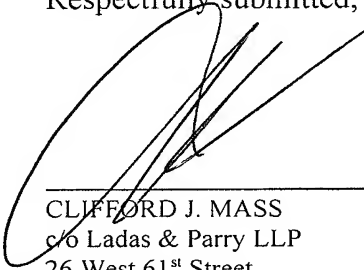
Element 20 of Cristian is a toothed sector that is rotatably mounted on pivots 120 in the rotating structure 9 of the drum 1. The toothed sector 20 is provided to rotate spindles 17, and cannot push the filter portions axially onto the relative stop members (which are not provided at all in Cristian). Therefore, element 20 of Cristian is clearly distinguished from the push means of the claimed invention.

Element 23 of Cristian is a cam groove formed in a ring member 24 and are completely different and distinguished from the first and second groups of stop members (again, are not provided by Cristian) located on opposite sides of the reference plane T as required by the claimed invention.

As discussed above, Cristian's device is directed to provide a totally different purpose and is clearly distinguished from the claimed invention. Since Cristian clearly does not teach or suggest each and every feature of the claimed invention, it is respectfully submitted that the claimed invention is clearly distinguished from and patentable over Cristian.

In view of the above, Applicants respectfully submit that all rejections and objections of record have been overcome and that the application is now in allowable form. An early notice of allowance is earnestly solicited and is believed to be fully warranted.

Respectfully submitted,



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